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THIS WEEK IN AG HISTORY

BY DARRIN J. RODGERS

Clarence H. Waldron (1885-1926), a Baptist-turned-Pentecostal minister, became the central figure in the first important criminal court case involving religious opposition to World War I. He was accused for violations of the Federal Espionage Act.

In 1917, Waldron and half of his Baptist congregation attended a Pentecostal evangelist's revival services and embraced the Pentecostal movement. A segment of the church that opposed the revival decided to force Waldron's resignation. They did this by accusing him of violating the Federal Espionage Act.

Many Pentecostals were concerned as Waldron's case carried weighty implications regarding religious liberty.

A trial in January 1918 ended with a hung jury as cross-examination seemed

to reveal that a church squabble was at the heart of the case.

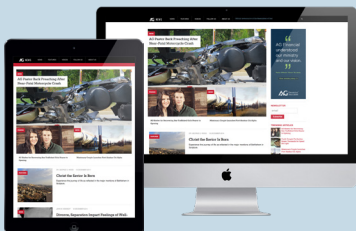
At a second trial in March 1918, the judge did not allow testimony regarding the anti-Pentecostal religious prejudice of Waldron's accusers. The jury returned a guilty verdict and Waldron was sentenced to 15 years in prison.

President Woodrow Wilson commuted his sentence following the conclusion of the war. Shortly after his release, Waldron received ordination with the Assemblies of God.

While Waldron was tried for his advocacy of pacifism, the Waldron case stands for a broader proposition — that religious liberty needs to be carefully guarded.

Read the April 5, 1919, issue of the *Christian Evangel* online at s2.ag.org/april51919.

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SUNDAY, APRIL 8, 2018

AG | NEWS

A COLLECTION OF THIS WEEK'S STORIES FROM [NEWS.AG.ORG](http://news.ag.org)

**KING'S LEGACY
50 YEARS LATER**

**NINJA PASTORS
IN ILLINOIS**

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RESIGNS AS GENERAL
SECRETARY**





KING'S LEGACY 50 YEARS LATER

BY NATHAN HEATH

MEMPHIS, Tennessee — Over 4,000 people attended the MLK50: Gospel Reflections from the Mountaintop conference Tuesday and Wednesday in Memphis. The dual purpose of the conference was to commemorate the life and work of Martin Luther King Jr. on the 50th anniversary of his assassination and to reflect on ways to move forward toward greater racial unity in the American Church.

In his brief 39 years, the Baptist minister became a towering figure in the U.S. civil rights movement, most notably helping to end legal segregation in the South. King received the 1964 Noble Peace Prize for his leadership in nonviolent protest.

Over 70 Christian leaders from various denominations spoke at the conference, delivering keynote addresses, leading breakout sessions, and participating in panels.

The MLK50 Conference comes at a time of high racial tensions in the U.S., both inside and outside the Church. Conference speakers praised the

work of King and his followers, and applauded contemporary successes in racial reconciliation. At the same time, they agreed on the broken state of race relations and the need for significant change.

A frequent theme of the conference focused on challenging the complacency of many white evangelicals regarding race relations. Numerous speakers issued strong challenges to the white Christian community to turn apologies and well-meaning words into tangible actions; to acknowledge the reality of past racist events; and to explicitly address racial injustice from the pulpit.

Conference speakers pleaded with American churches to couple their emphases on sound doctrine with an appreciation of practical ethics, spurring them toward societal engagement.

In the most somber moment of the two-day conference, speakers and attendees left the Memphis Cook Convention Center to gather at the

JAMES BRADFORD RESIGNS AS GENERAL SECRETARY

BY MARK FORRESTER

SPRINGFIELD, Missouri — On April 1, James T. Bradford announced his resignation from serving as general secretary for the General Council of the Assemblies of God. The announcement was made at Central Assembly of God, where Bradford has been serving as acting pastor for five months.

Bradford was elected as general secretary by the Executive Presbytery — the AG executive board of elected officers — in 2009. Prior to his service as general secretary, Bradford served as pastor of Central AG.

As a student he led a small Chi Alpha campus Bible study that eventually grew into a university church. Upon graduation in 1979, Bradford stepped into full-time ministry with that campus outreach.

In 1988, Bradford and his family moved to Southern California where he pastored Newport-Mesa Church in Orange County. Twelve years later, the Bradfords transitioned to Vancouver, B.C., to pastor Broadway Church.

In a statement Bradford said, "After

months of seeking to discern the Lord's direction in my life, I would like to request resigning as general secretary of the Assemblies of God in order to pursue expanded full-time pastoral ministry." He went on to say, "One of the greatest honors of my life has been to serve as an officer of the General Council of the Assemblies of God. It has also been a wonderful privilege and delight to work on [Doug Clay's] team."

General Superintendent Doug Clay conveyed his appreciation for Bradford's service to the General Council. "On behalf of the Executive Leadership Team, I would like to convey my sincere gratitude for Jim's service to God through his term as general secretary," stated Clay. "He has served with excellence! I have known him to be a man of integrity, a man of the Spirit, and someone I'm proud to call friend."

Bradford's resignation will be effective May 31. The General Council Bylaws call for the Executive Presbytery to fill the unexpired term of an executive officer.

THE ABCs OF SALVATION

ACCEPT that you are a sinner, and God's punishment for your sin is death and separation from God forever.

BELIEVE that Jesus paid God's price for your sin when He died on the cross.

CONFESS "Jesus, I believe You are who the Bible and history declares You are – the Son of God. I humble myself and surrender to You. Forgive me. Make me spiritually whole. Change my life. Amen."



NINJA PASTORS IN ILLINOIS

BY GINGER KOLBABA

Erik P. Scottberg never participated in sports while growing up and wasn't particularly active in early adulthood. But two years ago, as he sat on the sidelines at Shinobi Fitness in Bethalto, Illinois, and watched his then-9-year-old son, Kent, practice obstacle training and martial arts, he thought, *Why does he get to have all the fun?*

Since the studio offered adult classes as well, Scottberg gave the obstacle training a try and everything clicked. He began volunteering and teaching kids' classes at the studio. Within nine months, Scottberg, 39, began competing in the National Ninja League (NNL) and had applied to be a contestant on the television reality show *American Ninja Warrior*.

"What I like about the ninja warrior obstacle training is that you compete against other people, but really, a lot of the competition is against yourself," Scottberg says. "It's just you and the obstacle."

David M. Womelsdorf, 33, understands that sentiment. Seven

years ago, he was overweight and out of shape.

"I couldn't even bend over and tie my shoes without getting out of breath," Womelsdorf says. He joined a gym and started working out. After five years, he applied to be on *American Ninja Warrior*.

On March 29, Womelsdorf received notification that he had been selected to appear on the show as part of the Indianapolis competition. Filming will be April 29-30, and his appearance will air in the summer. Like Scottberg, he is also an American ninja warrior coach for kids ages 2 to 13.

While Scottberg and Womelsdorf both discovered ninja warrior training as adults and now compete and teach kids, they have something else in common: the pair are Illinois District Council pastors.

Scottberg is senior pastor of Cornerstone Church in Bethalto. Womelsdorf, a missionary associate with Missionary Church Planters & Developers, is set to launch Vive Church in Chicago in January 2019.

ROD LOY TO ASSIST GREEK FIREBIBLE PROJECT RESCUE LAUNCHES

BY JENNIFER BARRATT

BY KRISTEL ORTIZ

Project Rescue began in Bombay, India, 20 years ago with a partnership between ministry friends David and Beth Grant and K.K. Devaraj, director of Bombay Teen Challenge. The compelling goal was to help sexually enslaved women and children find Jesus and freedom.

Now as Project Rescue begins the next 20 years of taking Jesus to trafficked women and children in Eurasia and Europe, the Grants have announced a new partnership for the sake of accomplishing God's mission. Executive Presbyter and Pastor Rod Loy, First AG North Little Rock, Arkansas, has been named as the director of U.S. Strategic Initiatives. Loy will remain as full-time pastor of First AG in addition to his new role with Project Rescue.

Loy has tracked with Project Rescue since its birth. Over the years, Loy and First AG have shared generously with Project Rescue on multiple fronts.

Now, as the volunteer director of Strategic Initiatives, Loy will do officially what he has already been doing unofficially: Communicate the freedom stories of what God is doing through Project Rescue to mobilize pastors to give, pray, and engage; and serve as a consultant to the ministry in creative communications, networking relationships and creative partnerships in the United States.

On March 16, Life Publishers International celebrated the dedication of the *FireBible* in Greek. The translation took over a decade to complete. Life Publishers, AGWM's multi-platform publisher, worked with field personnel and Euro Greek, an Athens-based translation company.

More than 100 people attended the launch, held in Athens. Guests included local pastors and their wives, government dignitaries, and members of the publishing company.

"I want all my leaders to have this *FireBible* so that we can all study together from the same Bible," one church leader said. Many guests described a similar hope that the *FireBible* will serve as a bridge between various Christian affiliations.

As each person at the launch received their *FireBible*, they offered expressions of gratitude.

Jeff Dove, director of the Bible Alliance and Life Publishers, and Warren Flattery, a veteran AGWM missionary of 52 years who has served the past eight years with Life Publishers, spoke at the launch. Robert and Becky Creel, former missionary leaders to Greece, were also honored for their instrumental role in the completion of the translation and for helping to make the translation available to Greek speakers worldwide.

"Many thanks to all who cared, shared, and made it happen!" says Dove.



WILL TAX RULES DENT GIVING?

BY DEAN MERRILL

Representatives of charities are holding their breath on whether the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, signed into law in December, is going to dampen donations during 2018.

The standard deduction has been essentially doubled (to \$24,000 for a married couple filing jointly), which makes specific deductions such as medical outlays, property taxes, and charitable donations less strategic. Tax Policy Center predicts overall U.S. giving will fall by 4 to 6.5 percent, or \$12 billion to \$20 billion.

Pastors and church boards aren't yet pushing the panic button. However, they are paying closer attention to what's coming — or not coming — into the offering plate.

"The first couple of months this year have been down, enough to concern us," says Craig V. Riportella, lead pastor of Centerpoint Community Church in Waterville, Maine. "This is the time of year when heating bills are high and snow removal costs hit their peak. Thankfully, we're still making our budget."

"Church leaders will be wise to

encourage giving based on biblical stewardship, regardless of getting a tax advantage," says Don H. Steiger, superintendent of the Rocky Mountain Ministry Network.

One large AG church in Illinois experienced a 25 percent drop in giving almost immediately after enactment of the tax law.

"They've had to go into their reserves while they make adjustments," says Louie L. Salazar of the Illinois District Council. "I'm advising all our churches to watch their income very carefully — even week to week. At the next monthly board meeting, the financial report may already be as much as six weeks behind the curve."

For Christians, the shifting financial landscape brings an unexpected refocus on motives for giving. Do followers of Christ give out of pure gratitude and obedience to God, whether Uncle Sam's rules bring favor or not? For many believers in other lands, the thought of a tax break never crosses their minds on Sunday morning; they simply give with joyful hearts.

Lorraine Motel, the site of King's assassination by James Earl Ray on April 4, 1968. At 6:01 p.m., members of the King family joined prominent civil rights leaders and thousands of spectators in a moment of silence to commemorate the time of King's death.

Michael Nelson, president of the AG National Black Fellowship, says he hopes the meeting keeps the slain civil rights leader's dream alive.

"I pray that the 50th anniversary of King's tragic death would create an occasion to reflect on where we have been and yet look ahead to where we must go, if we are going to deal with the racial division and racial issues that

are still plaguing this country," says Nelson, who is pastor of The House of Peace in Jacksonville, Florida.

Malcolm P. Burleigh, executive director of AG U.S. Missions and a member of the AG's Executive Leadership Team in Springfield, Missouri, similarly exhorts the Church to take to heart the conference's lessons on justice and reconciliation.

"The reason we're not seeing change in the Body of Christ is that we are not heeding the words of our Lord and Savior to be unified," Burleigh says. "I hope and pray this conference will be the first seeds of that change. There can be no reconciliation until there is recognition of sin."

CHURCH PLANT THRIVES IN MARINA COMMUNITY

San Francisco might be known in some circles as a hostile environment for people of certain political or religious affiliations. But Assemblies of God church planters Travis and Jena Clark have experienced quite the opposite.

Canvas SF church opened in October 2013 with 23 people in the Presidio Theatre in the city's Marina district. The church has grown to more than 350 people today.

"Often what we call a 'graveyard,' God calls a 'garden,'" Travis Clark says. "I was told San Francisco was a graveyard for previous churches. But it's actually a garden bursting with life and wonder and a future. God does

not give up on anyone, and neither should we."

In every service a significant number of seekers, skeptics, and even atheists come to observe, experience and question. Canvas SF welcomes every critique and piece of feedback from visitors.

"What God has formed here is a growing family of believers and non-believers who are discovering what it means to be fully alive in Jesus," Clark says. "'Unity even if there isn't uniformity' has been the most common comment from people in our community; they say that Canvas SF is diverse, and yet people seem to genuinely love one another."